



March 7, 2022

Testimony of R. Bruce Donald
Southern New England Manager, East Coast Greenway Alliance

Raised House Bill 5291, An Act Authorizing Bonding for Bikeways, Greenways and Recreational Trails.

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Dear Co-Chairs Cohen and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Slap and Palm, Ranking Members Miner and Harding, and members of the Environment Committee-

The East Coast Greenway Alliance strongly supports HB 5291. The ECGA is a transformative infrastructure project of national and regional significance. It is an integrated recreation and transportation corridor for safe walking and biking stretching 3,000 miles from Maine to Florida, connecting our nation's most populated corridor. Currently, 35 percent of it is built, with over 100 miles of Connecticut's 200 total miles completed.

This important bill would increase the bond authorization for the Connecticut Recreational Trails and Greenways Grants Program to \$6 million. As you may be aware, the most recent grant round in Fall, 2021, and recently announced by DEEP, had only \$3 million available, and received 65 applications requesting \$22 million. The \$3 million was granted to twenty worthy projects, but another \$7-11 million in proposals were unable to be funded, showing huge pent-up demand for this Program.

As Chairman of the CT Greenways Council, we vet these projects, rank them, and submit our proposals for funding to DEEP. As you can imagine this recent deliberating by the Committee was very difficult and rather sad, as we all saw projects that we know well go unfunded. This Program is unique as we are the only state that has its own Recreational Trails Program modeled on the federal funds. Importantly, these matching grants available for planning, design, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, as well as educational programs, fill in major gaps in other funding sources that do not address smaller but critical connections to various state trails networks.

Please ensure Connecticut will remain a trails leader by renewing this significant investment in Connecticut's quality of life.

Sincerely,

R Bruce Donald
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